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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

U.S. HOUSE ARMED SERVICES
COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC FORCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE AND SPECIAL
OPERATIONS
U.S. HOUSE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE,
SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY,
RANKING MEMBER

September 4, 2021

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary
United States Department of State
2201 C St NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

The circumstances that led to hundreds of Americans and allies stranded in Taliban controlled Afghanistan are disastrous but we must maintain focus on evacuating them to prevent a potential hostage crisis. As a result of the full withdrawal of our military and diplomatic presence on 31 August, the Department of State (State) is now heavily reliant on private sector resources to assist those in hiding and should leverage their availability. I am asking State to formally collaborate and coordinate with these Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to guide at-risk individuals to safe locations and clear manifested charter flights in the region. Evacuating Americans and at-risk Afghans remains paramount, and utilizing private, volunteer resources in a public-private partnership is vital to accomplish the mission.

I am making this request because it has been brought to my attention by various NGOs that manifested flights are available, funded, and ready to fly. Further, groups of American citizens, legal permanent residents, SIVs, and their families remain in hiding in the vicinity of airports around Afghanistan as they await diplomatic engagement on landing rights and clearance to depart from the Taliban. These groups are communicating to my office that State is not proactively arranging the appropriate clearances to take full advantage of these flights. If this is true, I am respectfully asking for State to work collaboratively with these private groups as I am confident they are willing to share their manifests for appropriate vetting and prioritization in coordination with your Department.

Finally, I have been calling on State, in coordination with the Department of Defense, to immediately assemble a humanitarian response for predominantly Hazara and Tajik provinces north of Kabul to ensure safe-haven for internally displaced people and American citizens who cannot otherwise find evacuation across an international border. Former Vice President Saleh has offered in an open letter to provide such a sanctuary. I request State urge neighboring countries, such as Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and India, to authorize the use of their airfields for evacuation flights and humanitarian flights into and out these areas. A humanitarian safe zone will also reduce the possibility of genocide similar in magnitude to that which the Taliban perpetrated on those ethnic minorities in 1998, 1999, and 2001. Private sector NGOs are also willing to support this sanctuary in addition to the ongoing evacuation efforts and I again urge you to partner with these entities.

Thank you for your attentiveness and swift response to the dire situation and these requests. Please let me know if you have any questions or if I can facilitate communication between the private groups in reference.

Sincerely,



Michael Waltz
Member of Congress